

# IS INTERNATIONALIZATION INTENTIONALLY INTEGRATED IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS? EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

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*International student mobility remains the most visible aspect of internationalization. However, international students who study online tend to be an invisible group within current discourses on internationalization. In this article, drawing on the three authors' experiences and perspectives as guided by their three institutional (Scotland, Canada, and Australia) strategic initiatives, we explore how contemporary conceptualization of internationalization aligns (or does not align) with the growing interest in online learning and teaching practices. Using a reflective methodology, we developed and responded to a series of questions to critically explore how—and to what extent—internationalization policy and practice intersects with online teaching and learning. Drawing on a thematic analysis of our responses, we argue for the need for an innovative approach that intentionally integrates internationalization in online learning. Four recommendations for practices are offered, along with the direction for future research to support the intentional integration of internationalization in online learning.*

**KEY WORDS:** internationalization, learning, online learning, global perspectives, reflective methodology, higher education, integration of internationalization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary higher education institutions have implemented strategies focused on internationalization. Key economic drivers for internationalization include the fees of tuition for international students, impact on rankings and institutional reputation, and the fostering of global partnerships. The dominant focus on the economic rationale for

internationalization has been discussed by several authors (e.g., deWit, 2020; Fakunle, 2019). Recognizing the potential for internationalization to facilitate intercultural experiences for students, Bates (2019) argued that, “post-secondary institutions are expected to represent the same kind of socio-economic and cultural diversity as in society at large” (p. 47). Bates further suggested that “more focus on teaching methods that lead to student success, more individualization of learning, and more flexible delivery are all needed to meet the challenge of an increasingly diverse student body” (p. 49). In other words, as encapsulated in definitions of internationalization (Hudzik, 2011; Knight, 2004), higher education institutions can create, foster, and model diverse and inclusive communities through the fostering of an intercultural learning and teaching environment on campus and online. Speaking to the focus in this article, through the use of technology-enabled learning environments, international and domestic students are able to learn together in an array of programs without leaving their homes. Technology-enabled environments also create spaces and opportunities for learning to occur with students and instructors from around the world. Time and geography can be bridged through online learning. As such, it is not surprising that higher education institutions are strategically investing resources into online learning and teaching, as well as into internationalization initiatives.

Given the ability to design learning that brings people together virtually, a critical question we addressed is the following. Can it be assumed this leads to, or is, internationalization? This question becomes more pertinent and timely given a greater focus on the growth in distance learning, including online learning in higher education, particularly arising from the impact of COVID-19 in 2020.

The purpose of this article is to examine the intentional integration of internationalization—or the lack thereof—in online learning in higher education. This involves an examination of discourses focused on internationalization and online learning, combined with reflections on the experiences and understandings that emerged from a critical reflective process conducted by three educational researchers located in universities in Scotland, Canada, and Australia. Adopting a four-cycle reflective framework proposed by Rodgers (2002), we explored how, and to what extent, online teaching and learning intersects with the components of internationalization. Our analysis reveals the need for more purposeful integration of internationalization in the online learning environment. The article concludes with recommendations for leaders, faculty members, and instructional designers to explore innovative approaches in the intentional integration of internationalization in online learning environments.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Internationalization**

In the literature, there are multiple definitions and forms of internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit et al., 2015; Hudzik, 2011; Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Knight, 2004; Leask, 2009). While stressing how definitions can shape policy and practice, and vice versa, Knight (2004) proposed a working definition of internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11). In addition, institutions allude to their commitment to internationalization activities which aligns with the definition of “comprehensive” internationalization proposed by Hudzik (2011):

Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. (p. 6)

A recent review of strategic internationalization documents of five highly internationalized universities in the United Kingdom (based on having the largest numbers of international staff and students) (Fakunle, 2019) demonstrates an alignment with the key elements in existing definitions of internationalization. It was apparent that these institutions promote and engage in activities that are international in orientation, including setting goals to recruit international students and staff and using technology and the digitization of processes to enhance the breadth and reach of research and teaching.

It is widely known that international student mobility (ISM) has attracted the greatest attention in internationalization-related policy and research (de Wit, 2020; Fakunle, 2019; Gümüş et al., 2019). At the same time, the focus on mobility has inspired interest in how students who are not mobile can have an international education experience in their country. The idea to support the majority of students, who are non-mobile students, in relation to developing intercultural competences was first presented in Sweden and has been described as internationalization at home (IaH) (Nilsson, 2003). Beelen and Jones (2015) defined IaH as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments” (p. 12). However, what is currently missing in the literature is a lack of clarification around how an internationalized experience can be afforded to students who are studying online, whether in their own country (domestic learning environment) or abroad (international students). Furthermore, Garson (2016) noted that IaH is challenged

by the position of internationalization within a market framework. In other words, the dominant focus on ISM is driven by economic rationales, and it is unclear how economic rationality can be realized in a domestic “market” context.

The internationalization of the curriculum (IoC) presents another dimension of internationalization within a national context that has taken traction in the last 10 years. Internationalization of the curriculum is defined as the “incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study” (Leask, 2009, p. 209). Robson (2015) suggested that the IoC presents possibilities of developing global mindsets, skills, and understandings, and that this will include opportunities for the inclusion of international modules within programs and creating an environment where international and home students learn together within and beyond the classroom. However, existing conceptualizations of IoC share a common focus with wider internationalization discourses (Garson, 2016), which is related to representation of diversity on campus. To date, there is a lack of discourse on an intentional approach to internationalization in/of online spaces.

## **2.2 Internationalization and Online Learning**

Across Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, distributed learning, including online learning, has been used in higher education institutions for decades—at varying degrees of adoption and growth. Strategies for online class adoption vary by institution and have been reported to align with lowering infrastructure costs, supporting student schedules, and extending international reach. National-wide surveys such as EduConsillium (2015) are used to provide archived actual outcomes and to forecast trends and growth. Such reports inform responses by governments in regard to fiscal education allocations, and can impact federal growth strategies. More specifically, national surveys can inform internationalization growth strategies for education as identified in Canada's International Education Strategy (see Global Affairs Canada, 2019). From data reported in national surveys, the percentages of online class offerings are now being identified. Given the new posture of online learning due to COVID-19, institutions within particular faculties may now, more than ever, have the opportunity to consider developing and expanding their online offerings. In the following paragraphs, we illustrate examples of online learning growth prior to COVID-19.

Globalization and technological development have ensured greater focus and a growth in distance learning, including online learning in higher education. For example, courses offered online “are a form of distance education where the primary delivery mechanism is via the Internet. These could be delivered synchronously or asynchronously. All instruction

is conducted at a distance” (Johnson, 2019, p. 4). Bates (2019) reported that “credit-based online learning in recent years has become a major and central activity of most academic departments in universities, colleges and to some extent even in school/k-12 education” (p. 51).

In Canadian publicly funded universities and colleges, there has been a steady increase in offerings of online learning. Online registrations continue to increase yearly at a rate of 10% (Johnson, 2019). Statistics Canada (2020) reported that Canadian post-secondary enrollment in 2017–2018 had 14% international students (i.e., 296,469 students). In addition, “2% of international students were enrolled at offshore campuses or in distance learning programs offered by Canadian postsecondary institutions” (Statistics Canada, 2020).

A recent report from the Australian Government (2019), showed that in 2018, there were 1,562,520 students enrolled in higher education, a 3.2% increase over the previous year. The total number of international students in 2018 was 30.7% (479,987) of the total students enrolled, which was an increase of 11.3% from the 2017 total (431,438). Distance learning was reported in terms of attendance (internal, external, and mixed mode) with 28% (447,434) of students engaged in external and mixed-mode delivery.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom (comprising England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2020) identified that the total number of higher education students increased from the 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 enrollment by 2% (2,383,970). Twenty-one percent (485,645) of the total enrollment consisted of students who were not from the United Kingdom. With regard to distance, flexible, or distributed learning in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, 5% (120,365) of students were from European and non-European countries. However, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2020) website does not categorize student enrollments based on the number of international students who are solely engaged in online learning.

Given the information available from the three countries, there is limited data with regard to how many international students are enrolled in online learning programs. This suggests that at the national level in these countries, while much is known about the number of mobile students, as a quantitative measure of internationalization (deWit, 2020) there is a lack of information that makes it possible to ascertain the number of international students engaged in online learning. This is an issue that underpins our argument with regard to the absence of information in relation to internationalization components in online learning.

Within the broader literature, internationalization and online learning are addressed or tended to as separate topics. We did not find evidence that showed the explicit connection or intersection of fostering the principles of internationalization through online learning environments. Often, what is observed is the notion of how many international students

are in courses and programs, as opposed to how can the online environment enrich and enhance cultural and global perspectives by having students from around the world in the online classes. As institutions are expanding strategies for internationalization of the curriculum, it was unclear how this is being conceptualized through online learning environments. Given this current identified gap in the literature, we see this as an opportunity for exploration and examination in this article.

### 3. CONTEXT

As scholars in the field of education from three different universities, and on different continents, we are engaged in online learning and internationalization. Through our interest in the topic, we formed a virtual community of practice during 2019 and 2020. One member of our team of three has expertise with internationalization and is more of a novice with online learning in higher education. The other two members have a wealth of experience and expertise with online learning and teaching in higher education but limited capacity with the implementation of internationalization. One of us with online expertise also has experience as an administrator. All three of our institutions have strategic initiatives related to internationalization, teaching, and learning.

The impetus of work began with a conversation among two members of our team on a train ride to a conference in 2019. Through rich discussion, a critical moment occurred in the conversation regarding the lack of attention given to fostering internationalization in online environments, which moves away from just having international students in courses being offered by institutions. Our conversation centered on shifting from a predominant focus on internationalization from a number count to questions around what *does* it mean to have robust internationalization experience in online courses? Shortly after this initial conversation, the three authors began to meet regularly for trans-continental conversations using synchronous technology. The conversation began with our own areas of expertise (internationalization and online learning and teaching) as together we examined our own institutions' strategy plans for internationalization and teaching and learning, looking at particular details toward the online environment. We detail in the research design section how our bi-weekly conversations led to the development of 14 questions that helped us to probe further our institution's and our own experiences and practices as we explored the integration of internationalization in online learning.

## **3.1 Experiences with Internationalization and Online Learning in Higher Education**

### **3.1.1 Academic One**

I am located in a Scottish university. My experience with online learning includes organizing and presenting webinars on higher education topics disseminated to an international audience. I use the university's virtual learning environment for online teaching, feedback, and assessment to a mostly international student cohort. My research focuses on the internationalization of higher education, with a focus on policy development and student experiences. I recently developed a masters-level course, "Higher Education in the Global Context." The course examines approaches to internationalization from different stakeholders' perspectives. The aim is to allow students to understand and critically engage with the international context of higher education with a particular focus on internationalized higher education agenda within the framework of globalization.

### **3.1.2 Academic Two**

I am located in an Australian university. I have been teaching online since 2006 and have studied learning theories and methods for effective online teaching. I have a background in teaching on-location in multiple countries, as well as using online learning to teach in countries outside of my home country. Through our discussions on internationalization, I am finding that I have a limited understanding of the definition of internationalization as well as limited practical experience of purposefully building internationalization into my online classes. The institutional strategies at my institution do not seem to overtly thread internationalization into online learning outside of having international students take part in online classes. Suffice it to say, I do not think I have much experience with internationalization in higher education, except that I have been both an international teacher and international student.

### **3.1.3 Academic Three**

I am located in a Canadian university. I have four decades of experience with distributed learning as a student, instructor, and/or researcher. Given my experience, I have observed the evolution from paper-based correspondence to teleconference to virtual learning using various technologies for both synchronous and asynchronous communication. It is through my work as an academic and then through administrative roles, that I have become more aware of internationalization in higher education. Through institutional strategic initiatives, I have developed a greater understanding in terms of applying theory to practice in relation to how internationalization can be taken up in programs and courses.

## 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Over the course of six months, as a team of three academics, we engaged in critical conversations exploring the concept of internationalization, what it looks like in practice at our three institutions, as well as how online teaching and learning aligns and intersects with components of internationalization. We came to a point where we felt we needed to reflect on our understandings and the application of internationalization in our practice and that of our institutions. To help us move beyond conversation, we engaged in a reflective writing activity. Drawing on our notes from our conversations, we developed 14 questions to guide the reflective writing process. The questions were designed for us to think carefully about the following: what do we mean and understand about internationalization; how can institutional strategic initiatives help guide procedures and practice; and what does this mean in regard to implementation? Here, we include a sampling of the reflective questions. How do I define internationalization? Is internationalization an ontological question? How do my institution's strategic documents on internationalization and online learning inform my thinking about the integration of these two concepts? The three members reflected on these questions and wrote their own responses.

We identified a reflective research design as a frame to collect and analyze our data, which was based on our bi-weekly exploratory conversations. As a framework, we used the Rodgers (2002) four-phase reflective cycle (p. 235). Each of the phases is described in terms of the work conducted by the team:

- Description of experience: This phase involves “learning to describe and differentiate” (p. 235). We began by engaging in regular conversations in terms of internationalization and online learning. One activity we engaged in was exploring our institutional documents in relation to strategic planning and examining the nature of the relationship, if any, between internationalization and online learning. This led to the development of 14 questions designed for the authors to reflect on their institutional context and their own understandings and practices. We responded in writing to the questions over a two week period, and we independently wrote our responses.
- Analysis of experience: This phase involves “learning to think from multiple perspectives and form multiple explanations” (p. 235). Initially, the exploring multiple perspectives began with the bi-weekly discussions. Then, after responding to the question, the three sets of responses were hand coded by a non-team member using thematic analysis. Each of the themes was further discussed as we worked through the writing process for this article, along with revisiting relevant literature.
- Experimentation: This phase involves the “learning to take intelligent action” (p. 235). In writing the recommendations for practice and directions for future research (see



Section 7) this phase has provided a forum for us to explore the practical aspects of putting theory into practice or action. It has required us to revisit our assumptions and consider various stakeholders who need to be involved to create the shift in practice.

- Presence in experience: This phase requires “learning to see” (p. 235), which means moving from theory to practice in terms of beginning to implement what we propose. Currently, this phase is in the conceptualization phase.

## **5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

In this section, the following six themes are discussed in relation to the analysis of our responses to the 14 questions and with relevant literature: 1) defining internationalization; 2) internationalization as an ontology; 3) importance of internationalization; 4) institutional strategic initiatives for internationalization and online learning; 5) strengths of the intentionality of internationalization in online learning; and 6) from challenges to reality: intentionality of internationalization in online learning.

### **5.1 Defining Internationalization**

From our readings, reflections, and discussions, we each defined internationalization. All three definitions captured internationalization as a complex term that can be interpreted as both process (involving different stakeholders) and action (e.g., activities). As a process, internationalization is a way of thinking and approaching learning through a global mindset to enrich students' understanding that goes beyond national borders. From an evidenced-based criteria point of view, internationalization involves adoption of cultural competence, demonstration of multiple perspectives, and a sharing or representation that reaches beyond boundaries. “It involves the development of international perspectives for which cross/transcultural competencies play a critical role” (Academic Three). Internationalization activities can be summed up as “the range of activities in the delivery and participation in higher education including mobility, research and knowledge exchange within and across borders” (Academic One).

The findings evidenced that both the process and action were key to the definition of internationalization, which parallels the conceptualization of comprehensive internationalization as an institutional imperative that focuses on embedding international activity into the process and the delivery of higher education, as presented in Hudzik (2011). Additionally, in line with Fakunle (2019), our definition explicitly mentions mobility, which centers on individual participation in internationalization. Therefore, our definition acknowledges institutional and individual stakeholders as contributors to the processes and actions embedded within internationalization. We further acknowledge that internationalization activities can occupy local and international contexts and spaces, such

as in the form of sharing knowledge (learning, teaching, and research) and the internationalization of the curriculum in both campus and online environments.

From our exploration of defining internationalization, we found that it held a specific meaning within our discipline in terms of presence (e.g., notion of embodiment). Presence was deemed to be relational and promoted an awareness of other: “Internationalization isn't just about race or ethnicity, but it involves representing different mindsets, cultures and arts forms” (Academic Two). Its scope extends across the entire teaching practice, has an impact on and in the teaching experience that takes place, and demonstrates a global reach.

As noted by one colleague, “internationalization is viewed largely in terms of teaching the increasing numbers of mobile students who enrol in our programmes.” Within the scope of our programs and institutions, we need to push beyond just enrollment numbers to better capture the richness of “learning about and working with people from around the world” (Academic Three). Within education, it is about learning about and working with people from around the world. It is the integration of the socio-cultural components as we take up issues in education. It is the ability to take and integrate the socio-cultural component that brings multiple perspectives and ways of being into the disciplinary discourse.

## 5.2 Internationalization as Ontology

Internationalization also prompted the exploration of beliefs and meaning-making to fully surface the definition. A knowing of one's world views in teaching practice and being able to clearly conceptualize internationalization was described as important for enabling internationalization. Understanding one's ontology to internationalization can support buying into actualizing the process and enabling the creation of forums for further exploration. This means that “a broader scope of teaching context [is] presented to students; that I teach so that my students not only get an understanding of the cultural context of the country we are in, but also an awareness of other cultures and teaching experiences.” When one believes that teaching practices can enable internationalization, actionable learning experiences can be created for students to experience it first-hand. “It provides a forum to gain a greater perspective beyond one's local or national context” (Academic Two).

## 5.3 Importance of Internationalization

In our responses, we acknowledged that we live and work in a global context, and as such we need to create opportunities for developing understanding of people, culture, and the interrelationships within a global context. We acknowledged the importance of internationalization in terms of three key benefits. First, it supports the fostering of global

perspectives. This necessitates a movement away from an insular view to that of greater engagement in multiple perspectives. “There is a richness in the learning as we bring together multiple perspectives through discourse which then impacts not only our thinking but also our actions” (Academic Three). Second, it supports the development of global citizenship. “Internationalization supports looking beyond a border or boundary of culture/society and encourages interaction and exchanges that expand student learning and supports students for future employability” in a globally interconnected world (Academic Two). As we foster and develop greater internationalization practices within our programs and institutions, the focus should not only be on enhancing the attributes of the global worker, but rather on engaging in the deep understanding of others in order to nurture global citizenship. Third, it supports designing for inclusivity, where careful attention is given to bringing all voices and perspectives into the disciplinary and pedagogical conversations: as “we design and facilitate inclusivity in our teaching and learning practices, we need to carefully consider how we create space and place for all students to be included” (Academic Three). How, within the design of our courses and programs that we are creating, do we see that “internationalisation has huge potential for intercultural learning and understanding” (Academic One)? As such, we need to carefully design the learning experiences to embrace this potential in our courses and programs.

## **5.4 Institutional Strategic Initiatives for Internationalization and Online Learning**

In looking at our institutions' strategic documents, it was evident that each of our institutions had developed and implemented internationalization strategic initiatives. One member of the team said:

My institution's strategic document highlights the vision towards attaining internationalization goals, including increasing student mobility, intercultural learning, and research and knowledge exchange to influence globally and within the local society. To achieve some of these objectives, for example, delivering teaching beyond the campus, the document highlights the importance of digital technology.

The online learning component tended not to be articulated in the internationalization plan, but rather in some form with teaching and learning initiatives. As noted by one colleague, “I see the two more or less separated, except that the online learning allows for students from afar (i.e., other nations) to take part in a class with, generally, a nationally-based student body.” Given that internationalization and online learning are major initiatives that are framed within strategic documents, our collective reflection suggests:

As educators and researchers, it is our work to put the theory (framework) into practice. We are the designers for how such a strategy becomes a reality and to what

degree that has impact in and on practice. Each of us has a role in how to interpret and enact the strategy and through the collective we are able to attend to and address each of the goals/outcomes.

As a major part of internationalization agendas, it would be uncommon to find a university in the Western Hemisphere that does not state its vision or mission statement on how it will help its graduates to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to flourish in their lives and work in a globalized world. As has been previously mentioned, institutions promise to provide such an international experience, whereby students have the opportunity for intercultural encounters and an international curriculum. This aspect of the internationalization agenda has attracted some debate regarding what extent the promise of an international experience is afforded to all students (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Heng, 2017). However, both the vision of an international experience and the ensuing debate are focused on the experiences of students on campus. University strategic policy is also evident in the area of the use of technology in education. As such, universities are increasingly adopting and adapting teaching and learning for an online global audience in different forms including e-learning platforms and distance learning.

From our reflections, we agreed that there are benefits to intentionally embedding the elements of the internationalization of the curriculum into online teaching and learning. In the first instance, an internationalized curriculum taught online can bring similar benefits to enhance student experiences, as if they were delivered in person on campus. We considered that online learning might provide a platform to accelerate the facilitation of an international dimension of learning in our courses, seeing that the platform potentially could provide access to a more international audience that would allow the cross-exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Leask (2013) reminded us that “internationalization of the curriculum should be a planned, developmental, and cyclical process” (p. 103). We explored the notion of IoC as being *ad hoc* in contrast to being intentionally designed and integrated. For example, one colleague described the various strategic initiatives and activities. She noted that “the internationalization and online learning tend to operate in parallel without strategic or purposeful integration.” She further shared how informal conversations (reading texts) and other educational development activities are occurring for talking about how to “better integrate elements of internationalization in our online programs. However, this has not been formalized in terms of procedures or practice.” This brought up issues around convergence versus divergence of systems and teaching practices within an institution. In addition, we also reflected on the importance of roles and responsibilities. Our main question was the following: who should be responsible for ensuring that the IoC is embedded in courses within a school or across different schools within an institution?

From our readings, it was not apparent that such a role existed in other institutions. We thought this could be an area that would require further investigation in relation to the human resources implications to create such a position or whether there exists a department that such a role could fit within the university.

## **5.5 Strengths of the Intentionality of Internationalization in Online Learning**

As we reflected on what would be the strengths of fostering greater intentionality of internationalization in online learning environments, we agreed that it would enrich student learning experiences, would foster robust global perspectives, and enhance how the concept can be more inclusive in and across curriculum. “Raising a conscientiousness to such work may open the nature and type of readings that are used in courses, as well as the type of learning tasks for which local contexts can be used to engage in discussion as part of fostering a more global perspective” (Academic Three). Related to the point about inclusiveness and interculturality, it would be beneficial to develop specific learning outcomes related to an internationalized online learning (IoL) environment (e.g., developing global perspectives). A crucial part of our reflections involved how we can operationalize IoC online. In the first instance, there is a need to address the challenge of what should or could be our common goals and outcomes.

It is unclear if the inclusion of an international curriculum online is linked to a clearly specified aim toward promoting intercultural encounters as part of an inclusive classroom. This could be possible through facilitating group work involving students with different cultural backgrounds. At this point, it is important to reiterate that definitions of the IoC do not explicitly exclude the possibility of embedding it into virtual classroom environments; however, the focus is normally on “the need to create a campus culture of internationalization” (Leask, 2013, p. 106) taking into account disciplinary, institutional, and country contexts. We believe that in the current environment, where learning technology continues to move innovatively, there is a need for a broader expansion of IoC to fit into an online learning environment.

## **5.6 From Challenges to Reality: Intentionality of Internationalization in Online Learning**

As we examined the challenges, we agreed there is a need for system-wide collaboration within our universities and across disciplines and departments; for example, working with academic staff, educational developers, and international educators. For this change to occur, it requires a system-wide effort that embraces a collaborative focus to embrace and embed principles of internationalization into online learning and teaching: “The need for administrative leadership and support to create this change process” (Academic One).

Leadership to make this a reality is required from central administration down through deans, associate deans, and various specialization area leaders responsible for internationalization and teaching and learning to be “leaders and risk-taskers to move this initiative forward” (Academic Three). It is one thing to talk about the concepts, it is another to begin implementing expectations and wanting to see evidence of practice. Leading such a change process as noted by a team member, it “brings up the importance of ontology, disciplinary differences and leadership,” which speaks to the complexity involved in imagining and implementing this purposeful integration.

To bring about this integration requires investing in the development of resources, supports, and educational development. It cannot be assumed that faculty members understand the cultural underpinnings of internationalization, let alone are able to apply such principles in their course content and in the online environment. This requires the collaborative effort of a number of people with expertise and experience with internationalization, learning design, and online teaching, who can learn to work together in developing supports and resources for such work to be implemented. As argued by a colleague, it requires “educational development to support faculty as they develop deeper understanding of internationalization and its purpose and the application of this in their courses.” Educational development will need to engage various approaches to meet the learning needs of faculty members to achieve this goal. “It cannot be one-off workshops. Rather, maybe a community of practice where people come together in leading and implementing this work and drawing on expertise and each other in support” (Academic Three). Another approach may include mentoring to provide ongoing support within the context of the faculty member's work.

Given the focus is on fostering internationalization in online learning environments, faculty will need to develop confidence and competence in the use of technology to support the learning and teaching. As explicated in the following quote, one colleague took a threefold approach with regard to the technical component of this integration:

First, to know what technology is available and how it can be used to foster a robust internationalization in online environments. Second, to have technical support at the elbow to support creating (e.g., podcast, videos, simulation, interactive environments). Third, to be able to assess the value of how the technology has been used in terms of effectiveness for the learning.

Educational development and technology coaching will need to be available to assist faculty in exploring “ways in which the affordances of the online environment can be used to better engage with concepts of internationalization with their students” (Academic Three). Developing such capacity may take time and varying degrees of support.

It is apparent from the literature that the main areas of challenges with IoC include a lack of a common conceptualization across disciplines and institutions, and difficulty with getting academic staff involved in the process of integrating IoC into the curriculum (Leask & Bridge, 2013). While describing the complexity of the process of IoC confirmed from conducting the Australian Internationalization of the Curriculum in Action project, Leask (2013) stressed that “changes resulting from internationalization of the curriculum are likely to be profound if and when existing disciplinary paradigms, individual biases and commonly held beliefs are challenged” (p. 115). It is not known to what extent, or if, the beliefs of academic staff that may resist IoC may be underpinned by a lack of understanding of the processes of IoC and a lack of support to facilitate their work in this area. For example, research on engaging academic staff in internationalization has found that staff may lack familiarity with how to engage with the concept of internationalization based on their training and previous experience (Childress, 2010). As a team, we found also that our own experience and expertise situated each of us in either of two silos: internationalization or online learning. We do not underestimate the challenges that would be associated with the integration of IoC in online learning, conceptually and in practical terms. Our reflections suggest that there is a need for further research to explore how the two concepts can be integrated, especially in view of what we perceive as a growing need for academic staff to be engaged in online learning as part of the strategic direction of the university. This will need to take into account staff development opportunities, human resources and supports, and the affordances of technology.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Renewal of strategic plans and development of various initiatives reflect a strong commitment by the institution to internationalization. With the growth of online learning programs, there is greater flexibility and accessibility, allowing more international students to enroll in such alternate delivery programs. From the review of our institutional documents and websites, and the broader literature, we have observed that varying degrees of attention is being given to international student mobility, internationalization at home (IaH), and IoC. The dominant focus on international student mobility has, perhaps unwittingly, created a gap in data gathering and policy development to support an intentional integration of internationalization in online learning. In addition, growing interest in IaH and IoC has not adequately addressed how these concepts apply to online learning environments. The challenge, as we have noted, is to better create the conditions for the innovative and purposeful integration of internationalization and online learning, which will require a shift in procedure and practice. We have elaborated in this article that this shift needs to begin with an acknowledgment that the affordances of digital technologies can bring people and resources together in courses, but this may not achieve a meaningful

internationalized experience among students. This underpins our argument for innovation in online learning with the intentional integration of internationalization in policy development, as well as in the development of course materials. This article brings to the forefront how leaders, faculty members, and instructional designers can conceptualize learning in the online environment, with thoughtful planning to purposefully integrate and implement principles of internationalization. Without the intentionality of the integration, these two institutional strategic initiatives will continue to run parallel. To address this needed shift in practice with regard to the intentional integration of internationalization in online learning environments, in the following subsections we present four recommendations: leadership, faculty development, student support, and research.

### **6.1 Leadership**

From a leadership perspective, we currently have strategic plans that include goals. However, what is needed now is a twofold strategy: (1) a plan to bring the two initiatives together in a practical manner in terms of developing procedures and practices; and (2) ways of measuring the impact and benefit of the internationalization within online environments. As Leask (2013) rightly pointed out, “teaching staff need informed leadership and support within and outside of the discipline to internationalize the curriculum” (p. 112).

### **6.2 Faculty Development**

Developing the capacity of faculty members, both in terms of the application of internationalization within their courses and programs, also includes developing sound pedagogical practice of this capacity in online learning environments. Focused work needs to occur in developing an understanding of what is meant by internationalization and what the benefits are in relation to internationalization, along with how this can be implemented within and across courses and programs. Curriculum mapping may help to chart the scope and sequence, but how it is taken up within a particular course will be dependent on the context, as well as the faculty members' expertise and openness to the integration of internationalization in their courses.

### **6.3 Student Support**

In addition to weaving principles of internationalization into courses and programs, we need to also support students in understanding how their experience can be enriched by working in an internationalized online learning environment. This may require having students read texts beyond their local and national contexts, engaging them in various world views, as well as developing cross and/or transcultural competencies as they interact with each other in a technology-mediated learning environment.



## **6.4 Research**

Given the complexity of integrating internationalization in online learning environments, there is a need to conduct practice-based research. Such research will require the involvement of academic staff, academic developers, support staff, and staff members who are involved with internationalization. We do not underestimate the complexity involved in conducting such research. There is a need for innovation as we move forward in implementing internationalization components explicitly and intentionally in online learning environments. The current focus on online learning presents an opportunity to assess the nature and impact of this work. We advocate for research to be conducted to examine both the design of the learning environment, as well as the impact it has on student and faculty understanding and appreciation of internationalization.

## **7. DIRECTION OF FUTURE RESEARCH**

Drawing on institutional strategic documents and reflecting on our experiences as online educators, it is evident there is great potential in being more purposeful and intentional in how internationalization can and should be taken up in online learning environments. Therefore, our proposed directions of future research will require a three-prong approach. First, for the principles of internationalization to live well in online learning environments, we need to identify who needs to lead this work. Research should be conducted to investigate not only those who should lead in this effort, but also to ascertain what steps should be taken to shift from a strategy to implementation. Second, we are calling for a change in procedures and practices for this integration to occur in meaningful ways. The investigation needs to explore what change management factors and/or conditions are needed to support faculty members as they go beyond their discipline content to incorporate internationalization of the curriculum into their teaching practice. Third, as we observe the shift in practice, we need to evaluate the nature and degree of inclusivity being created. How is internationalizing of the curriculum in online learning creating a more inclusive learning environment, as well as fostering global citizenship? The research needs to study the shift in practice, as well as the impact it has on achieving the goals as identified in the institutional strategic initiatives.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

Given the recent COVID-19 crisis, we have observed a major move to alternate forms of delivery, such as online learning. This has led to questions about whether the current situation presents a transformative moment for online learning (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). We believe this situation presents an opportunity for scholars to reflect on how online spaces can be internationalized to contribute to the void in this area of internationalization.

As institutions are strategically investing resources into online learning and internationalization, what strategies are needed to create the right blend or integration? We need to shift the conversation from counting how many international students are in the program on campus or engaged in study abroad initiatives to thinking innovatively about the potential of how the online environment creates a rich forum of fostering internationalization. Through technology, we can bring students and faculty together from around the world to engage in learning that embraces multiple perspectives, socio-cultural experiences, collaboration, and shared knowledge. The principles embedded in the internationalization of the curriculum (Leask, 2009, 2013; Robson, 2015) also offer directions on how to innovate the online learning environment, where all learners can develop a global mindset and intercultural awareness that will help them live, study, and work in a globalized world. We, thus, envision the internationalized online learning environment as an inclusive platform, where global knowledge and cultures are shared to enrich understanding. As such, there is a need to shift policy and practice to thinking innovatively and differently in terms of how we design and facilitate an internationalized online learning environment.

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